

Obituary

Leslie William Samuel 1908-1980

L. W. (Les) Samuel, former Director of the Western Australian Government Chemical Laboratories, died on 20 July 1980. He was educated at Perth Modern School, the University of Western Australia and the University of London and was one of the many Modern School students of that era to become prominent in the professional life of the State.

After graduating B.Sc, he worked for a short period in the Department of Agriculture under Dr. L. J. H. Teakle on soil surveys, before obtaining a Hackett Studentship in 1933 to do a Ph.D. at the University of London. His supervisor at London University was Sir John Russell, Director of Rothamsted Experimental Station, who wrote to the Chancellor of the University of Western Australia saying "We found Samuel to be a diligent and capable investigator, a good manipulator in the laboratory and a clear thinker in seeking interpretation of his results".

Returning to the Western Australian Department of Agriculture in 1935 he became a cereal chemist and for many years was a judge of bread at the Perth Royal Show. In 1947 he became Deputy Government Agricultural Chemist in the Government Chemical Laboratories and was promoted to Director in 1957, in which position he remained until his retirement in 1973. During his seventeen years as Director he considerably increased the influence of the Laboratories in the community.

He was a man who lived for his work and in all his 40 years in the State Public Service, he took only a months long service leave and very little

of his annual leave. His ability as a clear thinker, perceived early by Sir John Russell, remained with him all his life. His scientific approach and integrity, and his ability to be nearly always right won him the respect of those with opposing views, even if many did not appreciate being proved wrong. He was a strong supporter of his profession and joined the Royal Australian Chemical Institute as an Associate in 1930. He was made a Fellow in 1948 and was honoured further by being elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Chemistry.

He joined the Royal Society of Western Australia in 1931 and served on the Council from 1957-1969. He was elected an Honorary Life Member in 1977. Although an active worker for the Society on sub-committees and as Hon. Auditor for more than 20 years he declined to take the office of President. Dr Samuel was a Fellow of ANZAAS for many years and was a foundation member of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science. He worked actively for these organisations, but again declined to hold any executive positions.

Les Samuel will long be respected and remembered by his friends, colleagues and associates, and many scientific organisations will be the poorer without his penetrating comments and constructive criticisms.

R.C.G., C.F.H.J.